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NSC BRIEFING

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DISMISSALS OF SATELLITE LEADERS CONTINUE

1. Two weeks ago I discussed the wave of dismissals of Satellite Communist officials which was just then developing. At that time Bulgarian strong man, Premier Chervonkov, had been demoted to the post of vice premier, Czech Minister of Defense Cepicka had been fired from his ministry as well as the politburo, and a number of officials had been dismissed in Poland. Since that time additional heads have fallen and all indications are that several more will follow.

2. High-level officials, closely associated with the injustices and excesses of the Stalinist era, have now been demoted or dismissed from their party and government posts in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Rumania. Dissident elements within the parties have been encouraged by these shifts to press their demands for greater liberalism and independence more vigorously and party factionalism has emerged into the open.

By these dismissals the Satellite regimes probably intend to show that cognizance is being taken of the public criticism deliberately generated since the 20th Congress, as well as to demonstrate that those responsible for Stalinist crimes are being punished. It also appears that where strong party factionalism exists, as for example in Poland, the situation is being exploited by one faction to eliminate key members of its opposition.

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3. The shakeup has been most extensive in Poland, where a new party leadership headed by First Secretary Gubas is faced with extensive, and in some cases uncontrolled public criticism, and with a factional struggle within the party. According to a Polish Communist official who defected to the West last January, the opposition is composed of about 100 senior party and government officials who have been demanding greater freedom of expression and a more independent socialist course for Poland. In response to these demands, which are now being expressed openly and undoubtedly reflect the opinion of large elements of the party and the population, seven government and party officials have been fired and four others demoted. Most important of these was Jakub Berman, a close associate of Stalin often described as the power behind the throne in Poland, who was dismissed from the politburo and his post as vice premier on 6 May. In firing Berman the new first secretary, Gubas, eliminated a personal enemy as well as a recognized relic left over from the Stalin era.

4. In Rumania two comparatively unimportant officials, Deputy Premier Dumitru Patrescu and State Arbitrator Victor Dura, were dismissed on 7 May. Dismissals of other satellites have generated rumors in Bucharest that party leader Gheorghiu-Dej will lose his position, but these appear unfounded. Some other top Rumanian Communists, such as politburo member Chisinevski, may be sacrificed, however, in the present campaign to divorce the regime from its past harsh Stalinist practices.

As an additional step in this direction the Rumanian government has also reportedly fired 12,000 security and civil police. This would represent about 11 percent of the Rumanian internal police forces.

5. So far the Czech government has dropped only one top-level official from his party and government posts, the highly unpopular Alois J. Cernik, minister of defense, deputy premier, and politburo member, who was ousted on 10 April. Public criticism of government policies, similar to that which has reached serious proportions in Poland, has been rapidly developing since that date. Detailed press articles are appearing almost daily criticizing the conduct of the National Assembly and the regime's policies concerning literature, education, and moral training. In the light of this increasing criticism, additional dismissals of important government officials appear likely. The position of the leading tri-umvirate of President Zapotocky, Premier Siroky, and Party First Secretary Novotny, however, does not now appear threatened.

6. There have been no dismissals yet in Albania, East Germany, or Hungary, but in the latter two countries there is evidence of considerable dissidence and factionalism within the parties.

7. The strong "rightist" opposition in the Hungarian party to Rakosi's leadership has been emboldened by recent events in the bloc to attack openly Rakosi and demand his

resignation.

Cognizant of Rakosi's problems, the UMMR publicly endorsed his policies on 4 April and again on 2 May when Pravda published an editorial by him. This editorial called on Hungarian Communists to "support and preserve the authority of the party leadership" and for energetic efforts to liquidate the dissemination of "rotten hostile views" in the party.

The UMMR's reason for continuing to support Rakosi may be its fear that his removal at this time would be regarded as symbolic of great changes to come and would stimulate undue unrest in the party and among the people.

8. In East Germany so much criticism of First Secretary Ulbricht as a practitioner of one-man rule was voiced by party members at the recent third party conference that leading party officials were compelled to speak in his defense at the conference and subsequently.

Ulbricht maintains his position only because of the direct Soviet support he receives. The Kremlin is probably fearful of the unrest that would be stirred up in East Germany and the resulting weakening of its position in the GDR if the East Germans were allowed the same freedoms as have been exercised by the Poles.